



NAVY HISTORY MATTERS

March 26, 2019



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Welcome to *Navy History Matters*—our weekly compilation of articles, commentaries, and blogs related to history and heritage. Every week we'll gather the top-interest items from a variety of media and social media sources and then link you to related content at NHHC's website (history.navy.mil), your authoritative source for Navy history.

★ A U.S. Navy with Women: Stronger, More Efficient, and More Capable

In the latest installment of CNO Adm. [John Richardson](#)'s initiative "Why We Do What We Do," NHHC Historian Regina Akers underscores the need to break down barriers to bring in the best personnel possible for achieving objectives. Secretary of the Navy [Josephus Daniels](#) had been preparing for a conflict even before the U.S. entered [World War I](#). While assessing manpower, Daniels discovered the Civil Service Department could not provide an adequate number of people to fill all the positions. He was delighted to learn that there were no legal barriers to [recruiting women](#) per the Naval Reserve Act of 1916. On March 19, 1917, Rear Adm. [Leigh C. Palmer](#) announced the Navy would be enlisting women primarily for clerical duties. The first female enlistee was Loretta Perfectus Walsh of Olyphant, PA. To learn more about the early contributions of [women in the U.S. Navy](#), [read the blog](#) at [The Sextant](#). Also check out the [U.S. Navy History Lessons Learned](#) page that features lessons learned from other events in U.S. Navy history.



Photo Link: <https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/2019/03/19/a-u-s-navy-with-women-stronger-more-efficient-and-more-capable/>

★ H-Gram: 027: *Wasp*, *Hornet* Discoveries

In his latest H-Gram, NHHC Director [Sam Cox](#) pauses from tracking the anniversaries of notable [World War I](#), [World War II](#), and [Vietnam War](#) naval history events. Instead, he discusses the exciting discoveries of lost WWII-era aircraft carriers [USS *Wasp*](#) and [USS *Hornet*](#), and other ships sunk in "Iron Bottom Sound" during the [Guadalcanal campaign](#). Over the course of the last several years, NHHC and R/V *Petrel* have established a "trusted collaborative relationship." For the first time, NHHC was invited to participate in the expedition of *Wasp*. Director Cox was on board *Petrel* for the discovery and admits that "seeing an aircraft carrier on the bottom of the ocean is quite a sobering experience." Nearly 5,000 Sailors died in the battles where *Wasp* and *Hornet* were discovered, including Rear Adm. [Daniel Callaghan](#), Rear Adm. [Norman Scott](#), and all five [Sullivan brothers](#). To learn more, read [H-Gram 027](#) at NHHC's [Director's Corner](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhnc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhnc-series/nh-series/80-G-304000/80-G-304514.html>

★ National Vietnam War Veterans Day

On March 29, the nation will observe [National Vietnam War Veterans Day](#) as we continue to commemorate the [50th anniversary](#) of the [Vietnam War](#). Every facet of the Navy we know today supported the Vietnam War effort. Navy Sailors were on the sea, along the rivers and coastal waters, in the air, and on land. Modern carrier battle groups launched air strikes from Yankee and Dixie stations in the South China Sea, destroyers and cruisers provided gunfire support, and the Navy was crucial in maintaining the U.S. logistical chain across the Pacific. In addition to combat operations, Navy personnel were involved in multiple training, advisory, infrastructure, and civil affairs programs. Today, our bilateral relationship with Vietnam demonstrates our support for a strong, prosperous, and independent Vietnam. Through hard work and mutual respect, we are now close partners. NHHC has developed a [commemoration toolkit](#) for Vietnam War Veterans Day to help celebrate the heroes of the war. NHHC's museums are scheduled to hold special events on March 29. Go to the [events](#) section of [NHHC's website](#) for times and locations.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/commemorations-toolkits/Vietnam-War-Veterans-Day.html>

★ Naval Act of 1794

On March 27, 1794, 225 years ago, President George Washington signed “An act to provide a Naval Armament,” known as the [Naval Armament Act of 1794](#). The act called for the construction of six frigates—[United States](#), [Constellation](#), [Constitution](#), [Chesapeake](#), [Congress](#), and [President](#)—commissioning of officers, and raising of crews. It specifies ship manning levels, pay, and rations as well. After the [American Revolution](#), the [Continental Navy](#) was slowly disbursed with the last frigate, [Alliance](#), sold in Philadelphia on June 3, 1785. For the time being, the American merchant fleet sailed unprotected, putting the United States in a difficult position. Privateers of the North African states of Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli would seize American vessels, cargos, and crews and then hold them for ransom. The disruption to trade and tribute payments to the Dey of Algiers was humiliating for the new United States, and the attacks were devastating to the economy. To learn more, read [“Act to provide a naval armament”—225th Anniversary of the Creation of the United States Navy](#) by Margherita Desy at [The Sextant](#). For more on [The Birth of the U.S. Navy](#), go to [NHHC’s website](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhnc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhnc-series/nh-series/NH-85000/NH-85796.html>

★ The Oerlikon 20 mm: The Right Tool for the Job

During the inter-war period, the U.S. Navy realized that aviation would likely play a key role in the next conflict. To neutralize the emerging threat, ships would need to be equipped with anti-aircraft weapons. The Navy’s Bureau of Ordnance worked on the problem prior to [World War II](#), but there wasn’t an effective, close-range weapon that was capable of taking down the fast-moving monoplanes of the day. The .50-caliber Browning machine gun lacked the power or the range, and the quad 1.1-inch gun proved to be equally disappointing due to frequent jamming. The solution came from Germany, which sold the rights to a 20 mm caliber cannon in the final days of [World War I](#) to a Swiss firm. The weapon was popular; both Allied and Axis utilized it. The U.S. Navy adopted the Oerlikon 20 mm in November 1940. It proved effective for short-range defense and was found to be easy to fire and maintain. To learn more, [read the blog](#) by Dan Garas at [The Sextant](#).



Photo Link: <https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/2019/03/18/the-oerlikon-20-mm-the-right-tool-for-the-job/>

★ SECNAV Names Future Destroyer

Secretary of the Navy [Richard V. Spencer](#) has named a future Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer, DDG-130, in honor of a Navy hospital corpsman who received the [Medal of Honor](#) for his actions during the [Korean War](#). Master Chief Hospital Corpsman William Charette was presented the nation’s highest honor for his actions on March 17, 1953, when Chinese soldiers in North Korea attacked Marine hill outposts. While treating a wounded Marine, Charette placed himself on top of the wounded Marine to shield him from an explosion. The blast rendered Charette unconscious, but when he awoke he continued to treat wounded Marines. All five enlisted Sailors who received the Medal of Honor during the Korean War were hospital corpsman. Charette was the only living recipient. He passed away on March 18, 2012. To learn more, [read the U.S. Navy release](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhnc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhnc-series/nh-series/NH-68000/NH-68545.html>

★ 75 Years Ago: USS Mason was Commissioned

Seventy-five years ago last week, [USS Mason](#) was commissioned at the Boston Navy Yard, where she was built. Although the ship itself was nothing special, the crew certainly was groundbreaking. *Mason’s* mission was to “show that a crew composed mostly of African-American Sailors could fulfill their duties as well as the crew of any other ship.” Although there was some skepticism, Chief of Naval Operations [Ernest King](#) directed in January 1944 that *Mason* be staffed with qualified African-American petty officers. To learn more, [read the post](#) at the [Hampton Roads Naval Museum’s blog](#).



Photo Link: <http://hamptonroadsnavalmuseum.blogspot.com/2019/03/seventy-five-years-ago-uss-mason-de-529.html>

★ 95-Year-Old WWII Vet Running Across United States...Again

In 2016, then 93-year-old [World War II](#) veteran [Ernie Andrus](#) became the oldest person ever to run across the United States. His journey began in San Diego, CA, and ended at Saint Simons Island, GA. A huge crowd was on hand to join him as the old Sailor stormed the beach at the completion of the three-year run. Although the feat was remarkable and most would rest on their laurels, Ernie said he felt bored and like yesterday's news. So, he decided he's doing it again, but in the opposite direction. He expects this run to take a bit longer and hopes to reach San Diego by his 100th birthday. "I've got all the runs planned clear up to 2025," he said. Ernie runs to raise money for the [LST 325 Ship Memorial](#). The LST is the same kind of ship he served on during the war. "A ship's like a person, you know, we call it the gray lady," he said. "It's part of my soul." To learn more, [watch the story](#) at CBS News.



Photo Link: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/world-war-ii-veteran-to-run-across-the-us-for-a-second-time/>

★ Month of the Military Child

April is designated as the [Month of the Military Child](#), highlighting the important role military children play in the armed forces mission and community. The Month of the Military Child is a time to recognize military families and their children for the sacrifices they make and the challenges that come with being a child of a servicemember. Although young, these brave sons and daughters stand in support of their military parents through moves and deployments. They make up a very special part of the nation's population. To honor their unique contributions and sacrifices, April is designated the Month of the Military Child.



Photo Link: <https://www.dodea.edu/dodeaCelebrates/Military-Child-Month.cfm>

★ NSA Saratoga Springs Established 45 Years Ago

On April 1, 1974, 45 years ago, Naval Administrative Unit, Scotia, NY, known today as [Naval Support Activity Saratoga Springs](#), was established. In 1999, NAU Scotia moved to Saratoga Springs, NY, located approximately 35 miles north of the state capital, Albany. On Oct. 1, 2010, the command name changed to Naval Support Activity when it became aligned under Commander, Navy Installations Command and Navy Region Mid-Atlantic.



Photo Link: https://www.cnric.navy.mil/regions/cnrma/installations/nsa_saratoga_springs.html

★ NHHC Webpage of the Week

In commemoration of Medal of Honor Day on the 156th anniversary of the establishment of the Medal of Honor, this week's Webpage of the Week is NHHC's [Medal of Honor](#) page. The page lists Medal of Honor recipients by time period and conflict from the [Civil War](#) to the [Global War on Terrorism](#). Recently added to the page is an essay by COD's Adam Bisno on the [Navy Medal of Honor](#) in the additional resources section of the page. Check out this page today and learn about the Navy's highest honor.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/our-collections/artifacts/uniforms-and-personal-equipment/awards/medals/MedalofHonorCU0/wilson-brown-medal-of-honor.html>

★ Today in Naval History

On March 26, 1942, 77 years ago, during [World War II](#), Adm. [Ernest J. King](#) became Chief of Naval Operations and Commander, U.S. Fleet, holding both positions through the rest of the war. To learn about other significant events that have happened on this day, visit [today in naval history March 26](#) at [NHHC's website](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/people/chiefs-of-naval-operations/fleet-admiral-ernest-j-king.html>